

02-277

EX PARTE OR LATE FILE

March 7, 2003

Dear FCC Chairman and Commissioners,

I would like to express my displeasure with the current course of media deregulation. While it has benefited big-media conglomerates like Clear Channel, it has led to the collapse of local media that is in touch with the public.

This is especially true in radio. Quite often, hit songs will be played on both modern- and classic-rock stations, and both light-pop and heavy-metal stations. While I applaud music that can reach a large audience, I'm suspicious when it spans two sets of polar opposites, especially when nobody I know has bought the CD or even downloaded it illegally for free. This would not happen if station owners cared about what listeners wanted, or simply understood the concept of musical genres.

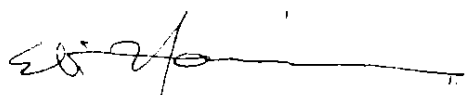
Big media claims they perform localized research to make programming choices. However, nobody from Big Media has asked me to be in any focus groups. I don't even know someone who knows someone who has participated. I sure don't want to hear six hours' worth of the Howard Stern Show every morning, or watch it again endlessly every night. I could care less about what's on one channel of NBC, let alone three. Media programming nowadays has nothing to do with what the people choose to hear, read, or watch. It's only about what media executives decide to force upon us.

The popularity of the Internet is often used to justify media de-regulation. Unfortunately, this is a bogus claim. Internet consolidation is squeezing out the few remaining independent voices just as rapidly as with television, print, and radio. Incumbent service providers like Ma Bell and AT&T ultimately control the content people can look at. Furthermore, many Americans just don't have access to the Internet in what is known as the "Digital Divide," a phenomenon that is very real and much more significant than Michael Powell's "Mercedes Divide."

Media ownership rules were imposed as a response to the totalitarian control of media in communist and fascist countries. My grandparents' generation saw how a monopolized media led to a loss of liberty, so they created ownership restrictions to prevent that from happening here. Why, then, are these rules being rolled back? Whether media is monopolized by the government or a corporate entity is inconsequential because the result is the same: poor quality, fewer choices, and an erosion of freedom.

Freedom of the press is our First Amendment right. By taking media out of the public's hands and putting it into those of a few large corporate conglomerates, deregulation stands in defiance of the Constitution of the United States or America and threatens our cherished democracy. We need to reinstate ownership rules, not repeal them further.

Sincerely,



Eli Harrison

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